

# Neighborhood Grapevine

News from the City of Milwaukee's  
Department of Neighborhood Services

## *New Centralized Phone Intake Numbers*

The efforts are continuing to create a centralized complaint intake system. That goal moved a step closer as 286-2268 became the number of choice to call in for any of the Service Areas under the new Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS). The good news is that it is NOT a voice-mail-jail with a menu of possible options. Instead a live operator will take the information needed and then route the call through to the proper channels. This customer friendly approach was a key point offered in the initial focus group discussions on the design of the new department.

In addition to residential complaints, the number will now be used for nuisance animals, abandoned autos, litter, debris and rubbish in yards, code complaints, vacant lots and virtually anything that might disrupt a neighborhood. Included is the environmental health component of DNS which also deals with swimming pools (public and private), asbestos in all buildings, noise monitoring (TV's, radios, air-conditioners, music at festivals), public filling stations, fire and building condition inspections, laundromats, dry cleaners, massage establishments, mobile home parks, waste tire generation licenses, light pollution, and commercial building litter.

Meanwhile, some other important phone changes are the numbers at the former permit desk. All of those functions are now under the Development Center. A voice mail system at 286-8211 will redirect all of those calls to the proper number. The Building and Zoning Information Line offers 7 options. The caller can get information on a building or a possible survey; get answers to technical questions or make an appointment with an examiner; get an update status report on a permit; get information on permits in public way or house numbers; find out location, hours and fax; and obtain forms and permit information.

Internally, DNS is working on summary education materials that staff can use to accurately assess the

## *Zero Tolerance Seminar Trains Neighborhood Leaders*

A special seminar was hosted by DNS's Landlord Training Program (LTP) and the CBGA. The purpose was to bring together all of the available city "tools" that neighborhood groups and community organizing committees could use to help improve their neighborhoods. Over 100 community leaders attended.

The event was kicked off with a welcoming speech by Mayor John Norquist. Norquist praised the efforts of the community groups and encouraged them to continue their work. He made a special pitch to get involved with the upcoming 2000 census which he said tends to miss count the number of people in the very neighborhoods that many of the organizations work with. There are also many new temporary, but good paying jobs available through the census bureau.

The event reviewed some of the successful efforts by the groups, particularly those done in Merrill Park by former organizer Tess Reiss. Ms. Reiss successfully created a "Quiet Summer" Campaign that targeted a number of common neighborhood problems. Problems like graffiti, vandalism, loud music or disruptive neighbors, and drug houses. Her efforts lead the city to use nuisance ordinances to take control of one problem property that was also an eyesore. Merrill Park continues the work, while Tess is now an independent consultant working with the City through the CBGA. Her services will be lent to those groups who demonstratively show they are having an impact in turning neighborhoods around.

The event hosted by LTP and CBGA featured numerous displays with materials to help neighborhood groups organize and get people involved with neighborhood improvement. Resource guides, samples of graffiti removal products, anti-crime information, home loans and financial assistance information were provided.

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## PHONE CHANGES from page 1

proper section for a call. Learning what each of us do is a challenge enough on top of the constant reorganization or opportunities to try something new. As the new numbers are established we will be updating phone lists, brochures, forms and other documents. If you notice any error, please call Todd Weiler at x3214. ☺

## Spring Clean Up

from Martin Collins, Deputy Commissioner

It has been a tough winter! The normal complaints about exterior sanitation problems are above normal due to the now exposed debris and the 70+ m.p.h. winds that scattered it around. In addition to the telephone complaint response test described elsewhere in this newsletter, DNS has tried another new approach in 6 of the most impacted census tracts. Sanitation identified the areas in greatest need and we wrote to over 2600 property owners in those areas.

The letter was straightforward : Please inspect your property and clean it if you have not already done so. Inspectors will be active in the target areas after March 15. If the City has to clean it up, the cost will go on your taxes and it will not be cheap! The average clean up charge last year was \$160. May we have your cooperation?

It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the effort but based on the telephone calls and the incidents reported, it has produced a favorable response. Many of those owners own property outside of the test area. The letters did not identify the property address so many owners inspected all of their properties.

Our preliminary research into why owners do not comply with clean up orders from the department shows that the official notices may meet the legal requirements but are not as persuasive as they could be. A hot pink colored notice has now been attached to the official form. It explains the potential cost to the owner for not cleaning their property. Already reports of its effectiveness have shown that clear speaking can pay off in results.

On April 5th, the Department started Operation Neighborhood Clean-up. The additional inspectors and one additional support person are being assigned to concentrate on garbage nuisances. They will be working out of the 16th & Fond du Lac Office. ☺



Attendees review materials at the DNS Anti-Graffiti table staffed by Ron Roberts and Sharon Blando. (INSET)-Mayor Norquist welcomes the members to the Zero Tolerance Seminar.



## SEMINAR from page 1

Among the new programs previewed was the Safe Streets Now program. This concept organizes neighbors to sue in small claims court to bring about neighborhood improvement by people who refuse to obey local ordinances on things like drug dealing, prostitution, and other disruptive behavior. For more information on any of these programs, call LTP at 286-2954. ☺

## Time to Think Innovatively!

The fourth Annual Innovation in Government Awards are coming up. Applications will be available in June. Got an innovation that saved money, time or both? Time to tell everyone else. Marty Collins is heading a special committee to gather all the contributions. Please call or email Marty with your suggestions. DNS has been among the finalists each of the previous three years! ☺

## DNS Y2K Testing

from Carolyn Wood, Systems Coordinator

Y2K testing was done on Saturday, March 20. Tom Mishefske, Laurie Petrie, Randy Pucek, Sue Pucek, Lynne Steffen and Carolyn Wood tested the department's software applications, including NSS and the cash system, while Karen Anderson tested the file server and network software. Time flew by while Karen changed the server clock several times throughout the morning, allowing us to test for the changeover to 2000, leap year, and other crucial dates. Coming in on Saturday and changing the file server time allowed us to test not only how particular applications worked, but how all the network components (server, computers, routers, printers, applications, software, etc.) worked together.

Our efforts drew outside interest, since apparently we were the first City department to do this kind of global Y2K testing of the network--

Alderman Richards came to watch and later presented a report to the full common council.

From the testing, we learned that some applications need some changes, but we did not have any major surprises. We've developed a list of remaining Y2K tasks and are confident that they can be accomplished this year.

Also, permits were downloaded from the mainframe and became part of NSS at the end of January. They were made part of NSS for Y2K compliance and to save costs. The new permit system allows more than one section to be assigned to a permit, as in the case of occupancies. It also has better reporting capabilities and the ability to send contact letters directly from NSS. ☺

## *New Covenant builds New Homes at 43rd & North*

A 2.3 acre site that was cleared to make room for a freeway got a new lease on life as a housing development to benefit residents of the Metcalfe Park neighborhood in Milwaukee. Phase II of the development in the cleared land between 38th and 40th street at W. Meinecke began with a groundbreaking ceremony last month following a worship service at the church that spearheaded the development. New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church formed the New Covenant Housing Corporation as a means to address the needs of the neighborhood. This action follows the successful Phase I which was completed in 1995.

A critical part of the funding for Phase II came from Local Initiatives Support Corporation which invested \$2.8 million into the project. The New Covenant Housing Corporation assembled a broad based development team to bring the project to fruition. Local architects and law firms contributed a variety of services. Many of the contributors were on hand to receive recognition for their work on the project.

Mayor John O. Norquist assisted the groundbreaking. The Mayor said, "This is another example of the faith-based model of neighborhood improvement that has been so successful for Milwaukee. It is fitting that this site become a neighborhood landmark for what works well in Milwaukee instead of another ribbon of concrete."

John Moutry of New Covenant said, "The realization of this project is reflected in scripture. This project could have crumbled at any time, but didn't because of the faith of those involved. We had a dream," said Moutry. "It just took a long time in the making."

The 2-bedroom units feature 1185 sq.ft. and rent for \$535. The 3-bedroom units will rent for \$595. All units feature a special design to isolate interior noise and provide more privacy. Two of the 3-bedroom units will feature a first floor bedroom and full bath to accommodate a person with a disability. In addition to the housing, a community building, an office, a community gathering room and maintenance facilities will be built.

New Covenant expects to continue to be actively involved in additional housing and community development in the area. The Parkwest Townhouses Phase II project has an allocation of housing credits from the State. The credits provide incentives for private sector investment in housing developments such as Parkwest Townhouses Phase II.

For information on this and other developments contact the NIDC at 286-5618. ☺

## *DNS Reference Guide in Final Phase*

The DNS Reference Guide is in the final editing phase. The Guide is intended for both staff and public use. It has general information on the services each section provides; the most common violations relating to property maintenance, pest and animal control, and environmental health issues; and background information on the Department's complaint processing, enforcement, and licensing functions. The Guide, which will be available in April, will be in a loose-leaf format to allow periodic updates. ☺

## *Animal Cruelty Cases now under DNS*

from Don Schaewe, Ast. Sup., Nuisance Control

As a result of the Wisconsin Humane Society's decision to discontinue animal cruelty investigations, the Department of Neighborhood Services staff recently received training for and is conducting this activity. The Milwaukee Police Department will conduct investigations outside of normal DNS business hours. The Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission [MADACC] coordinated the training, although MADACC staff will not perform these duties when it becomes operational.

Jim Newell, Victor Johnson, Eugene Pitchford, John Cullaton, Dave Markwardt, Laura Gilbert, Bob Free and Don Schaewe have received 24 hours of training to identify cruelty and legal responses. Staff has begun responding to requests for service and has investigated enforcement action in several cases. ☺

## *Nuisance Vehicle Ordinance Revision*

A team effort of representatives from DNS (management and staff), City Attorney's Office, LRB, Police, a landlord and an Alderman worked to create a revised nuisance vehicle ordinance. Based on an Ohio approach, the code will now define more precisely what is a vehicle that can be towed off of private property if the owner fails to comply with department notices.

The current code requires that a vehicle be a health or safety threat. The new criteria will also include vehicles that meet three of five criteria: (1) not moved for 30 consecutive days; (2) partially dismantled; (3) inoperable; (4) parked on an unapproved surface (etc., on the lawn); and, (5) unlicensed or improperly licensed plates. These will allow DNS to ultimately tow away and shred vehicles parked on lawns, with flat tires and expired plates. The Public Safety Committee unanimously endorsed the proposal at Grapevine press time, and it now awaits approval by the full Council.

The team's objective was to widen the scope of the vehicles that could be abated by towing. Our next objective is to examine the notice procedures in an attempt to speed up the abatement process and to reduce the amount of inspection time required. Special thanks to Don Schaewe, Bob Free, Greg Jach, Jennifer Klouda, Claire Weber, Linda Uliss-Burke, John Heinen, Captain Sue Edman, Kim Queen and Alderman Henningsen for their work to improve this ordinance. ☺



The DNS name is getting around town thanks to the new sign change on the Nuisance Control vehicles. The vehicles are at the 16th & Fond du Lac office.

## What Does the DNS Reorganization Change?

from Martin Collins, Deputy Commissioner

Here is a brief explanation of the changes that will occur as a result of the creation of the new Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS). I hope that this helps all staff in serving their customers.

The big picture explanation is that DNS = Building Inspection minus Plan Examination plus some Health Dept. functions plus the Housing Section (**Leo Ries** and company) from DCD. The more detailed picture is as follows:

Plan Examination: this goes to DCD. They will still be located on the 10th floor until late 1999. The functions here include applications for permits, occupancy certificates and plumbing plan examination. **Gregg Blando** remains as the supervisor. **Martha Brown** becomes his new supervisor.

Construction, Electrical, Elevator, Sprinkler, Boiler and Underground Tank Inspection stay in DNS. **Richard Paur** is the new supervisor. **Rudy Petrowitsch** has retired.

Condemnation remains in DNS. **Tracy Williams** is the assistant supervisor. They will be taking over the demolition of the city owned buildings from DCD and the zoning inspection function. Additionally, once the position is filled and the staff trained, an additional inspector will be added whose function will include both zoning enforcement and enforcement of the historic code regulations (altering historic buildings without certificates of appropriateness, for example.) **Jeff Crouse** is Tracy's supervisor.

Housing inspection remains in DNS at Mitchell Street. They were joined by the Vector and Nuisance Control operation from Health in February. The Vector and Nuisance control inspectors will remain at the 16th and Fond Du Lac office. **Dave Krey** and a portion of the environmental health inspection function also joined staff at Mitchell Street. These functions include but are not limited to, asbestos, commercial exterior sanitation, swimming pools, filling stations, tire generators, certain noise and light violations and massage establishment inspections.

Also joining Mitchell are **Frank Ferraro** and **Bill Karr** dealing with city owned lot maintenance. Problems of litter at restaurants, lead paint inspection and water quality testing will remain in the Health Department.

Commercial property inspection will also remain in DNS in its present location. **John Appleby** is the supervisor.

**Skip Seager** will remain as the senior manager at Mitchell Street. **Candice Maynard** remains the DNS business manager.

The Housing development functions will remain located at the 809 building with Leo Ries until the Plan Exam Staff moves to the first floor of the 809 building for the new Development Center. Then the Housing folks will go to the 10th Floor of the Zeidler building.

Procedurally, the first change that you will see is that all service requests [f/k/a complaints] will be entered into the NSS complaint system by address. This means that the functions transferred to DNS will now have service requests available to those with NSS access for the first time. Later, the orders issued by these sections will also be added to the system. It will take some time to stop using the term complaints and shift to what they really are – requests for city services.

## Bank Lending Seminar Announces \$10 Million HICAP Program

Spurred by a critical report by Milwaukee's Comptroller's Office about current trends in home loan lending in the central city, a special seminar was hosted in part by DNS to bring local lenders the latest information on how to improve their track record for making loans in poorer neighborhoods. Also announced was the availability of a new Home Improvement Capital Access Program (HICAP). This new tool will be available to local lenders to assist people previously denied a loan, once the details have been worked out. HICAP will become operational in April.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Office conducted the seminar in conjunction with the new Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS) and local lender members of New Opportunities for Home Ownership In Milwaukee (NOHIM). Attendees learned about Milwaukee's various targeted economic areas and what financial products are currently available. Information included programs such as those operated by DNS, Wisconsin Gas, Wisconsin Electric, and others which assist customers who don't qualify under local bank loan standards as well as how to make loans using standard products.

Leo Ries, deputy commissioner of DNS said, "We have been working with area banks to help find ways to expand the access to improvement loans for people who have the ability, but still don't qualify, perhaps because their home has not appreciated over the years." DNS works with lenders and neighborhood partners to improve conditions in Milwaukee Neighborhoods.

Area bank officials, private and public economic officials explained as part of special lender panel highlighted examples of how the HICAP program has worked successfully in other communities. During the breaks there were marketing opportunities for banks to share resources to tell the various qualified segments of the community about what is being offered, who can qualify and how much each option will cost. ☺



As bankers and loan brokers listened at the seminar at the Astor hotel, special displays were set up to help sell the various programs. Non-profit home improvement and public home loan programs from around the city and state all offered their products. DNS debuted it's new Home Rehabilitation Resource guide at the event.

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## Regulatory Changes For Condominium Oversight Advances

from Leo Ries, Deputy Commissioner

The workgroup convened by DNS to look at condominium regulation has completed their work and submitted their recommendations to the State Legislative Reference Bureau for drafting. The work group was made up of a very talented group of private individuals who have extensive experience in condominium management. We're very grateful for the time, enthusiasm and insight that they contributed to this process. If anyone would like a copy of the proposed recommendations, they can contact Leo Ries at 286-8212. ☺

## DNS Housing Staff Update

The DNS Housing Preservation Division (formerly the Housing and Neighborhood Development Section of DCD) is pleased to announce a number of new employees. After encountering quite a bit of staff turn-over in 1998, the Housing Preservation Division, which staffs the Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) is now back to full strength. Joining the staff over the past three months are:

- **Mike Veith**, Housing Rehab Specialist, who previously worked as a Code Enforcement inspector.
- **Paul Giesen**, Housing Rehab Specialist, who previously worked as Project Director at the WAICO/YMCA Central City Housing Initiative.
- **Pete Skiba**, Housing Programs Specialist (Loan Officer), who previously worked with the Community Block Grant Administration.
- **Judy Carson**, Housing Programs Specialist (Loan Officer), who is coming to us from Housing Resources, Inc. where she worked as a Home-Buying Counselor.
- **Dannette Bousley**, Management Accountant in our Fiscal Section, who has become a regular employee of NIDC after working for us for a year as a "temporary" employee with an employment agency.

Some other changes of note:

- **Cheryl Nelesen**, has been promoted to the position of Fiscal Officer, replacing Taj Schoening, who went to work for the Public Library
- **Marcia Friske**, who has worked as a Loan Officer, has been promoted to the position of Housing Programs supervisor
- **Emma Kennis**, who worked for a while as a Loan Officer, is now back in the Fiscal Section overseeing bookkeeping for NIDC.
- **Kevin Blanco**, joined DNS as an electrician inspector.

We want to welcome these new employees to DNS and congratulate those who received a promotion. ☺

## Grants for Neighborhood Art Projects Available

The Neighborhood Millennium Art Initiative will offer 5-10 artists grants up to \$50,000 each for permanent works of art to celebrate the millennium and our community. For details contact the project director Maggie Jacobus at 906-1888. ☺

## Highlights of State Code Updates

from John Hetzer, Development Center

As we learned at the March '99 Uniform Dwelling Code Updates, the revised Wisconsin UDC is now a go for May 1, 1999, after a few previous false starts.

On the energy conservation side of the changes, some things to look for are: stickers identifying U-values on windows that use anything other than the default window tables of Comm 22; increased basement insulation, especially if the dwelling unit does not have a high efficiency furnace; and increased exposed foundation wall insulation. As far as the energy calculations are concerned, there are a few options. Simplest, but most constraining, is use of one of the prescriptive packages in Comm 22. If one of the prescriptive packages doesn't fill the bill, the system design method of the UDC can be used, or the WIScheck program will do the figuring for you if you've got a computer. Finally, a system analysis method is available, by using the REM/rate computer program. This method will also be used if you are intending to get an Energy Star for your dwelling.

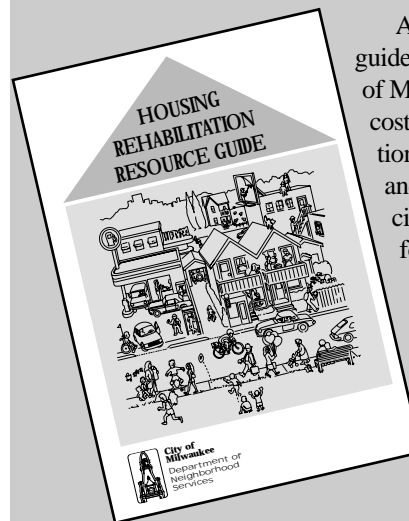
Over 25 non-energy-related changes have been made to the UDC, many of which mimic similar provisions in the State commercial building code. Some highlights: roof framing anchorage requirements, safety glazing requirements, and required fire separation distances among dwellings and garages.

Finally, as a response to the ISO insurance audits soon to come, some time was spent at the updates on reviewing structural requirements related to one- and two-family dwellings, such as header, beam, and column sizing. ☺

## DNS STAFF CHANGES from page 4

I am sure that there will be issues to be resolved that we have not yet foreseen. It is hard to have the largest interdepartmental reorganization in the City's history without having to tie up some loose ends. As issues come to your attention that need resolution, I would appreciate your bringing them to my attention.

## NEW Housing Resource Guide



A new Housing Resource guide is now available. It lists all of Milwaukee's resources for low cost home financing, rehabilitation agencies, with special grant and loan programs, and agencies offering special services for targeted neighborhoods.

The 26 page directory contains all of the contact information needed, a brief description of the offer and the summary requirements to be eligible. Call NIDC at 286-5618 for a copy. ☺



Mayor Norquist joins Rev. Roy Nabors of Community Baptist Church and UW-Milwaukee's School of Architecture's Chair of Urban Planning in announcing Milwaukee's newest Targeted Investment Neighborhood.

## New "TIN" Offers New Opportunities

Looking for a new place to invest in Milwaukee? Do you live in the vicinity of North Avenue and Sherman Boulevard? The City of Milwaukee now has new incentives for people interested in that area. Last month Mayor John O. Norquist joined with a group of area leaders to get the word out to the public about new opportunities in the 30 block area. The continuing faith-based revitalization effort is a partnership with the popular Community Baptist Church, headed by former Milwaukee Alderman, Pastor Roy B. Nabors. The boundaries of the Uptown Crossings/Community Village TIN are, from Wright Street on the North, to Washington Park on the South and from 39th street to 47th street.

The Mayor designated Uptown Crossings/Community Village, Ltd. as a Targeted Investment Neighborhood (TIN), which will make it eligible for funds to improve residential and commercial properties. The Mayor awarded a \$220,000 Large Impact Development Grant to renovate, lease and manage a large commercial complex at 4401 W. North Avenue as the signature project in the revitalization effort.

Pastor Roy Nabors said, "We celebrate the partnership between the Church and the City for all the benefits it will have in helping create a peace and prosperity zone in Milwaukee's Central City. Our efforts will be a model for others who want to create sustainable community development by integrating economic, social and spiritual factors in the change process."

Alderman Willie L. Hines, Jr., in whose district the TIN is located, said he is very excited about the project and hopes people take advantage of it.

Leo Ries, President of the Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) said, "The Uptown Crossings/Community Village TIN joins a family of other TINS that seek out partners interested in low interest loans, grants or development assistance available through NIDC." NIDC operates in conjunction with the Department of Neighborhood Services to improve conditions in Milwaukee Neighborhoods. ☺

## Telephone Service Request Response Study Preliminary Results

from Martin Collins, Deputy Commissioner

The Nuisance and Environmental Health Section has been running a study of the effectiveness of an alternative service request response technique. The test involves inspectors attempting an initial call to property owners 48 to 72 hours prior to inspecting to see if garbage nuisance complaints are verified. The idea is to see if such calls can motivate a sufficient number of owners to clean up their property without DNS staff having to write orders/reinspect/bid for clean up/ have contractor clean up/place lien on the property. A comparable control neighborhood was included for tests on both the north and south sides of the city.

Preliminary test data shows that the complaint was not verified in 24% of the control area addresses but not verified in 66% of the test group. When one considers that this section responded to 9407 requests for service of this type in 1998, a 42% reduction in the need for violation notices to be issued is potentially very significant.

All involved agreed that the results were promising enough to continue. The test area has now been shifted into a lower income area with a higher percentage of rental owners where compliance has historically been more difficult to obtain. An evaluation will be made in early April at which point a decision to expand, contract or modify the approach will be made. Credit goes to Assistant Supervisors Don Schaewe, Bob Free and Inspectors Jenny Klouda and Dennis Fink for their efforts to evaluate this technique to respond to these problems faster and less expensively. ☺

## DNS How to reach us



3646 - 1673 S. 9th St, 3rd Flr  
5600 - 809 N. Broadway, 2nd Flr  
3441 - 841 N. Broadway 10th floor

3441 Admin Office	5447 FAX NIDC
2514 Boilers	5164 FAX Nuisance
2163 CDA	8715 Graffiti Hotline
3838 Code Compliance	5618 Housing Preservation
3874 Code Enf. Commercial	2954 Landlord Training
2268 Code Enf. Residential	3443 Microfilm
2557 Condemnation	3646 Mitchell Recept.
2513 Construction	8212 NIDC Admin.
2532 Electrical	3535 Nuisance Control
3361 Elevator	2507 Permit Desk
3860 Enforcement (Court)	3361 Plumbing
3538 Environmental Health	5049 Property Mgmt Training
5165 FAX 16+Fond du lac	8569 Property Recording Prog.
8667 FAX Broadway	3214 Public Information
3386 FAX Mitchell	

All DNS Prefixes are 286-

Have a contribution for the next edition of the  
DNS GRAPEVINE?

Email it to Todd Weiler, Editor: [tweile@ci.mil.wi.us](mailto:tweile@ci.mil.wi.us)